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In order to understand youth handicapped by social status differences, it was necessary to realize positive and negative aspects of their personalities. Some of the negative aspects were contradictory attitudes toward self and others, materialistic attitudes, low-level aspiration and motivation, and different socio-cultural patterns. The positive aspects included selective motivation and creativity, capacity for meaningful and loyal personal relationships, ingeniousness and resourcefulness.

Principles helpful in dealing with disadvantaged children were formulated. These included accepting the invalidity of the concept of fixed intelligence. The dialects of development gave to temporal and sequential factors a critical role in determining the appropriateness of procedures in behavioral development and change. Disturbed learning patterns were recognized as the products of specific learning disabilities. The interpersonal relationship that we call counseling and interviewing may often be entirely inappropriate.

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COUNSELING YOUTH WHO ARE HANDICAPPED BY SOCIAL STATUS DIFFERENCES

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Statement Prepared for the Symposium on
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(Author's note: A late commitment to prepare material for our Symposium and unexpected involvement as an expert witness in an important school desegregation case have provided some handicaps. My contribution which follows might best be regarded as a statement of position from which a paper will be developed. E.W.G.)

Among the factors which influence social status in our society are ethnic, cultural, economic and religious group identification. The differences in status and group identification operate in many ways to influence the behavior of group members. One of the ways in which this is manifestedis with respect to the manner in which individuals in the various subgroupings relate to the norms which are assumed to be operative among white, middle class, U.S. Nationals. Numerous studies point to the fact of higher incidence of variance from these norms among subgroups relegated to lower status. However, the data from these studies could also be analyzed to show the range of variation within subgroups including the variations within the group upon which the accepted norms are based. When this is done specific instances and patterns of norm variance are found in such wide distributions as to leave only incidence of variance as a possible significant factor with type of variance being more generic. Thus possibly accounting for the wide variety of characteristics, sometimes contradictory, reported to be found in a sub-subgroup like "school drop-outs" or "juvenile delinquents" or "underachievers" or "socially disadvantaged" or "minority group youth."

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My topic suggests that there are some special considerations, some unique problems and some specific approaches to counseling which must be taken into account when we apply this process of guided behavioral development and guided behavioral change to youth handicapped by social and cultural differences. I will deal with some of these in this paper. However, I seriously doubt that there are any such factors which are fundamental to counseling or guided behavioral development and change. Our focus on a handicapped group and some of the special problems and considerations involved, however, may lead us to the identification or support of concepts and theoretical positions that are fundamental to guidance. In medicine when concerted attention has been given to the epidemicity and control of pathological syndromes we have often gained insight into and understanding of some of the basic postulates in medicine. It may also be that as we look more closely at the guided development of children who are handicapped by differences in social status, we may gain a better understanding of some of the postulates basic to the process of guided behavioral development and change in general and counseling in particular.

The manner in which investigators or practitioners approach the understanding of the organization of behavior or the modification of behavioral organization is greatly influenced by the theoretical position held with respect to the genesis of patterned behavior. Problems raised for investigation, the research design chosen, as well as phenomena which are observed, generally reflect the theoretical bias of the investigator. The choice of goals and practices to be utilized in approaches to behavioral change are usually determined by the practitioner's view of the mechanisms underlying behavioral organization.

Theories of behavior may be divided between those which posit an essentially projective view and those which posit an essentially reflectional or interactive view of the mechanisms underlying behavioral organization. In the projective view predetermined, intrinsic patterns are thought to be released by stimulation and projected on to the environment where their specific form is facilitated or inhibited. Among persons adhering to this position, emphasis is given to hypotheses concerning the existence in the organism of intrinsic drive states which exist prior to and independently of life experiences and which are the basic forces in the determination of behavior. Certain behavioral patterns are seen as performed, stored, and waiting for the proper time and condition for emergence. Capacities and traits are seen as determined by these intrinsic factors which can only be modified somewhat by the environment. The fundamental character of patterned behavior is seen as genetically established and bound. Environmental forces are considered to influence the organization of behavior by determining: (1) the directions taken by the primary energies and drives; (2) the environmental objects to which they become attached; and (3) the specific time and form in which they will emerge.

On the other hand, the interactionist or reflectional position holds that all organized patterned behaviors are reflections of the interaction between the organism and its environment. Environmental interaction

is seen as the crucial determinant and molder of patterned organismic function. Temporal and situational phenomena are regarded not as releaser but as causative and mediating agents. Behavioral characteristics, traits, species typical behaviors, all organized patterned behaviors are seen to exist only as a result of sensory input flowing from interaction of the organism and the environment. Behvioral potentials are said to be genetically seeded in the sense that the organism includes structural responsivity which is largely determined by the nature of the genes, but the behavioral patterns, behavioral characteristics and quality of functions are determined by interactions between organism and environment with the nature of these interactions being critical for organized behavior.

When behavior theory is used to determine practice in guided behavioral development and change, the differences in the two positions are manifested in the goals, design and management of directed learning experiences. (Directed learning is used here as an inclusive term to cover pedagogy, counseling and psychotherapy.) The dominance of the projective view in directed learning has been reflected in:

A) A laissez-faire or neglectful attitude toward the training and development of intelligence;

B) A monitoring as opposed to a stimulating approach to academic and social readiness and personality development;

C) An exaggerated emphasis on the predictive value of the classification and quantification of psychological appraisal data and the neglect of qualitative appraisal data as a basis for planning and intervention;

D) Distortion of aspiration and expectation levels based upon unjustified ceilings on potentials for human development and adaptation;

E) Placement of the burden of proof: (1) on the examinee rather than on the appraiser or appraisal method; (2) on the learner rather than on the counselor or counseling method.

F) Emphasis on adjustment or acceptance of assumed realities rather than on modification of the environment and the individual's interaction with same;

G) Overemphasis on selection and placement (educational and vocational) with an underemphasis on the nurturing of interests and aptitudes and the development and training of capacities and skills;

H) An eclectic and empirical approach to research in directed learning with little application of the scientific method in exploration, experimentation and investigation.

Now despite my negative view of these influences of projectomist theory on directed learning, it has worked for many learners or at least many learners have learned something despite its influence. But what of those who do not learn or who have not learned at the same rate and in the same way as have our successful learners? What is the relationship, the controversy to directed learning for youth handicapped by social status differences?

A problem of increasing proportion in educational and social planning is that of providing educational opportunities appropriate to the characteristics and needs of large numbers of children who live in communities where income level and social status are low; where general intellectual stimulation is inappropriate to a high level of academic achievement; and where patterns of social organization, cultural characteristics and cultural values differ markedly from those which are dominant in middle-class society.

Several studies of children attending school in many of our disadvantaged communities have pointed to atypicalities in development and in attitudes toward academics and in school achievement. Children living under varying conditions of deprivation and social-cultural atypicality are also reported to show disporportionately high rates of social maladjustment, behavioral disturbance, physical disability and mental sub-normality. The fact of academic deficiency among a high percentage of this population is also well documented. The specific nature of these deficiencies is not so clearly documented; but in the few attempts at specifying the characteristics of these learners, several conditions seem commonplace. Among these are:

1. Contradictory attitudes toward self and others with low self-concept and the resultant exaggerated positive and negative attitudes toward others prevalent;
2. Utilitarian and materialistic attitudes, not unlike those which dominate in our society, but which in the light of limited horizons and opportunities function as depressants on motivation, aspiration and achievement;
3. Low-level aspiration and motivation re academics and academic products, as well as in relation to some social norms;
4. Low-level academic task orientation and variable levels of general task involvement;
5. Styles and modes of perceptual habituation which do not complement the emphases which are important to traditional academic efficiency;
6. Weaknesses in the utilization of abstract symbols and complex language forms to interpret and communicate;
7. Weaknesses in the utilization of abstract cognitive processes with marked tendency to favor concrete, stimulus-bound cognitive processes;
8. Marked socio-cultural patterns in their conditions of life which tend to be non-complementary to traditional standards of academic achievement and social stability, these include hypermobility, family instability, distorted model relationships, economic insufficiency, housing inadequacy, repeated subjection to discriminatory treatment, as well as forced separation from many of the main channels of our society.

Even fewer attempts have been made at identifying the positive characteristics of socially disadvantaged children. However, among these may be listed the following:

1. Selective motivation, creativity and proficiency

2. Complex symbolization in in-group language forms and ritual behavior
3. Functional computational skill
4. Accuracy of perception and generalization around some social, psychological and physical phenomena
5. Selective recall, association and generalization
6. Capacity for meaningful and loyal personal relationships
7. Capacity for meaningful and sustained selective task involvement
8. Ingeniousness and resourcefulness in the pursuit of self-selected goals and in coping with the difficult conditions of life peculiar to states of economic insufficiency and poverty; low social class status; and low racial-cast status.

These positive and negative characteristics may be viewed as intrinsically determined, environmentally fixed patterns which lend themselves to but modest modification. Such a view would be consistent with a projectionist view of behavior and is certainly the implied position flowing from traditional approaches to the rehabilitation of socially disadvantaged children. These characteristics may also be viewed as the products of social, economic and cultural factors which have imposed patterns of organismic-environmental interaction which are inappropriate to the mastery of developmental tasks peculiar to traditional standards of academic, social and personal achievement. Since it is clear that the dominant influence of projectionist theory in pedagogy, counseling and psychotherapy has not enabled these disciplines to deal effectively with the problems of children handicapped by social disadvantage and cultural atypicality, it is of crucial importance that we examine some of the implications that flow from an alternative theoretical position.

I have provided some examples of the manner in which the projectionist theory is reflected in the design and management of learning experiences. I have also pointed to some of the special characteristics of socially and culturally disadvantaged children. Many of these characteristics identify this population as an underdeveloped and handicapped group when compared to the norms we have come to associate with middle class white children from whom much of our procedures in education and counseling have been developed. When social and cultural atypicalities result in disadvantages for the learner, differences in the design and management of learning experiences become crucial. What then are some of the implications of the interactionist position for directed learning in socially and culturally disadvantaged children?

1. Theorists and investigators working within the context of interactionist theory suggest that the concept of fixed intelligence is no longer tenable. Intelligence is seen as a non-static, variable phenomenon based upon the nature and quality of central processes or cell assemblies which are the products of organismic-environmental interactions. The quality of intellect is a function of the nature of the interaction between organism and environment. Much of what we see as adequate or inadequate intellectual functioning is a product of processes that man can control.

2. Motivational and attitudinal factors are experientally determined and experientally modified.

This postulate is best reflected in Hebb's and Hunt's use of the Incongruity-Dissonance Principle which Hunt sees as making both motivations and reinforcement "intrinsic to the organism's relations with its environment, intrinsic, if you will, to the organisms's information processing. It is as if the organism operated like an error actuated, feedback system where the error is derived from discrepancy between receptor-inputs of the present and the residues of past experience which serve as the basis for anticipating the future."

What we reflect as motivation and attitude are the products of current sensory inputs interacting with residuals of earlier experience. These earlier experience residuals are thought to gain sequential organization. Grossly incongruous inputs disrupt this organization while slight degrees of incongruity lend interest and are stimulating. What we see as no motivation and negative attitude are instances of environmental encounters which are grossly incongruous with residues of prior experience.

3. The interactionist position leads us to conclude that the dialectics of development give temporal and sequential factors a critical role in determining the appropriateness of procedures in behavioral development and change. It appears that the so-called normal patterns of development gain their temporal and sequential regularity from a natural history which is common to a given species. Where variations and deprivations occur, expected patterns are disturbed. This is evident in some of the work in sensory deprivation, critical periods and developmental tasks.

Thus it may be that around the critical role of temporal and sequential factors in development that we may move toward reconciliation of some of the conflicts between a behavioral approach and an existential approach to counseling.

4. In the applied area disturbed learning patterns are coming to be recognized as the products of specific learning disabilities. The interactionist position suggests that learning disability may be a primary disorder reflecting the nature of the child's formal and informal learning experiences and should not be routinely regarded as a secondary disorder representing a projection of intrinsic disturbances or limitations. Atypicalities in any one or combination of points 1, 2, 3 may result in disturbances in learning, and remediation which does not take these into account will be ineffective.

5. If we view the learner as a product of the interaction between organism and environment, psycho-educational design in directed learning for socially and culturally disadvantaged children must be dictated by the topography of the learner -

An analysis of the specific and detailed character of the learner - and the topology of the learner's experience -

An analysis of the specific and detailed history of the learner's experience.

This kind of analysis can only result from qualitative appraisal, descriptively reported and leading not simply to diagnosis and classification but to prescription and treatment which are appropriate to the topography and topology identified.

6. "If environmental encounters - interactions - are the crucial determinants,

it may well be that our preoccupation with the interpersonal relationship we call counseling and interviewing may be entirely inappropriate. Our theory and the needs of our children may force us to adopt new models and new techniques of guided human development and behavioral change. It may be that we depend too heavily on vicarious experience when the situation requires real life experience in healthy situations, under growth stimulating circumstances, with appropriate resources, supports and direction. Non-radical modifications could be made through group guidance, guided group interaction, inter-family consultation, or sheltered work, study or social situations. More radical moves take the counselor into the old fashioned approach to social service, into community organization, into politics, into the manifold jobs of developmental facilitation - facilitating development through the management of environmental encounters at school (curricular and extra curricular) home (family relations) and community (economic growth, jobs, equality of opportunity, democratic living.)

I have the feeling that it would be helpful if I were to say something very practical about guidance for socially and culturally disadvantaged children. However, if I am asked how to counsel such children, I must say that I don't know since I am not at all certain that we know how best to counsel or that counseling is our most effective tool of guided behavioral development and change. I am not at all sure that what I do in the counseling relationship is meaningfully significant in the life of a child whose conditions of life deny at crucial points the validity of democracy's promises and humanity's hopes. I can make him feel better. If we are lucky, he may see in me a spark of humanity with which he may identify and use as a model. Or I may be able to help him gain insight into the ways his own behavior helps to defeat his purposes. But those of us who have worked with these children know that once the process of social maladaptation has begun and is consistently reinforced by negative life experience, our successes are the exception rather than the rule.

If I am asked in what direction we should move to achieve behavioral change and growth in socially disadvantaged children and probably in all children, I can only suggest that the experiencing of self in interaction with objective and subjective reality is the only way in which consciousness and behavior develop and the only way in which they change. In my frame of reference, it is not so much in the isolated and insulated counseling relationship but in the main stream of life experience that these interactions are maximally operative. Consequently, our focus in our efforts at behavioral growth and change should be on the guided interaction of self with environment. A focus on the design and provision of environmental encounters calculated to best complement individual human potential and need.